

1950 Census Findings on Health Occupations

About 1,400,000 persons, or 2.5 percent of the total civilian labor force in the United States in April 1950, were employed in a group of 17 health occupations. These estimates are derived from preliminary summarizations of the 1950 Census of Population prepared for the Division of Public Health Methods, Public Health Service. Persons on active duty with the Army, Navy, and Air Force, as well as those unemployed, are not included.

The figures for 1950 as shown in the accompanying table are based on a preliminary summary and are subject to change. Figures for 1940 are from the 1940 Census of Population, adjusted where necessary to conform to the 1950 classification. Final 1950 figures and adjusted 1940 figures for the United States will be published by the Bureau of the Census in the spring of 1953 in the series P-C reports.

Since the census figures differ from those available from other usual sources, it seems important to urge caution in the use and interpretation of the 1950 census findings on health occupations. An attempt is made in the following notes to discuss some of the points to be considered in using the new data.

Physicians

Almost 192,000 persons in the civilian labor force in April 1950 were reported employed as physicians and surgeons in these census tabulations. The increase during the decade 1940-50 was 26,000, or 15.6 percent. During the same period the civilian population showed a net gain of 14.1 percent.

The estimated number of physicians, based upon reports from the American Medical Association, was 205,300 in the spring of 1950. This figure includes 9,900 retired, or not in practice, and 7,500 in the armed forces, leaving 187,900 in active civilian practice. When the 1948

AMA age distribution is applied to the 1950 total and adjustments are made for those retired and in military service, the active civilian physicians fall into the following groups in terms of age at last birthday: 24,200 under 30 years of age, 134,700 from 30 through 64, and 29,000 aged 65 or older as of April 1, 1950.

The census figures are about 8 percent higher than the AMA estimates for the combined age groups under 65 years. The census tabulation shows 26,700 physicians under 30 years of age, an excess of about 2,500 over the AMA. For the age group 30-64, the census enumerated 144,500, about 9,800 more than the AMA. At the younger age the census enumeration may have included some medical students taking clinical training and hence reported as physicians. Obviously, the census count must include, in addition to persons with medical degrees, many thousands in such occupations as chiropractic, dentistry, osteopathy, and veterinary medicine. On the other hand, physicians reporting that they spent all, or a major part of their time, in teaching or administrative work, for example, would not have been classified as physicians in the census.

At the upper end of the age scale the census enumeration is substantially less than the AMA figure. The census tabulation shows 20,800 employed physicians aged 65 or over, about 8,200 fewer than the AMA. Since the census enumerator asked specific questions about work during the week prior to enumeration, many of the older physicians may have reported inactivity at that time although they had not designated themselves as retired in reporting for the American Medical Association Directory.

Dentists

About 75,000 persons were employed as dentists in civilian practice in April 1950, accord-

ing to the 1950 Census of Population. This is an increase of 7.5 percent during the decade 1940-49. Projection on the basis of the preliminary age distribution of employed male dentists indicates that at the time of enumeration about 8,000 of the employed dentists were under 30 years of age, 59,400 were in the age group 30-64, and 7,600 were 65 years of age or older.

Studies published by the American Dental Association indicate that there were about 87,000 living dentists in the spring of 1950. Of this number about 1,600 were in the armed forces. While reliable information on retirement is not available, limited data obtained by the American Dental Association from a surveyed sample of dentists have been published. Application of their findings to the total dentist group suggests that the retired do not number more than a few thousand and that this group, together with those serving with the armed forces, cannot account for all of the difference between the two totals.

Inspection of age distribution data from the two sources indicates that the census count exceeds by a thousand or more the number of dentists under 30 years of age for whom data were

recorded in the ADA files. This excess may reflect the inclusion of some dental students in their clinical training years. For the age span 30-64 years, the count obtained by the Bureau of the Census was several thousand less than the number included in the ADA total even after liberal adjustment is made by subtracting from the ADA total retired dentists and those serving in the armed forces. It seems likely that this under-enumeration may in part explain the excess in physician enumeration discussed previously. While the census total for dentists 65 years of age and older is smaller than the ADA figure for this group, adjustment of the latter by subtracting retired dentists brings the figure into close agreement.

Nursing Occupations

In the field of nursing, four categories of personnel are reported by the Bureau of the Census. These are graduate professional nurses, students of professional nursing, attendants in hospitals and other institutions, and practical nurses, together totaling 810,920 employed in civilian practice in April 1950.

Employed persons in selected health occupations, by sex, for the United States: 1950 and 1940

Occupation	1950			1940		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
<i>Professional and technical workers</i>						
Chiropractors.....	12, 897	11, 061	1, 836	10, 629	8, 758	1, 871
Dentists.....	75, 176	73, 024	2, 152	69, 921	68, 874	1, 047
Dietitians and nutritionists.....	22, 329	1, 341	20, 988	(1)	(1)	(1)
Nurses, professional.....	398, 194	9, 683	388, 511	}352, 486	7, 509	344, 977
Nurses, student professional.....	76, 071	1, 646	74, 425			
Optometrists.....	15, 476	13, 758	1, 718	10, 237	9, 762	475
Osteopaths.....	5, 146	4, 366	780	6, 007	4, 905	1, 102
Pharmacists.....	88, 087	80, 854	7, 233	77, 779	74, 563	3, 216
Physicians and surgeons.....	191, 947	180, 233	11, 714	165, 989	158, 381	7, 608
Technicians, medical and dental.....	76, 174	33, 053	43, 121	(1)	(1)	(1)
Therapists and healers ²	24, 443	12, 347	12, 096	17, 055	9, 545	7, 510
Veterinarians.....	13, 410	12, 547	863	10, 717	10, 638	79
<i>Other workers</i>						
Attendants, hospital and other institution.....	202, 168	83, 117	119, 051	93, 049	54, 307	38, 742
Attendants, physician's and dentist's office.....	40, 777	2, 028	38, 749	32, 309	1, 387	30, 922
Opticians, and lens grinders and polishers.....	19, 147	16, 643	2, 504	11, 098	10, 107	991
Midwives.....	1, 698	307	1, 391	} 91, 107	3, 909	87, 198
Practical nurses.....	134, 487	5, 731	128, 756			

¹ Data not available. ² Not elsewhere classified.

Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census. Figures for 1950 based on preliminary summarization and subject to revision.

Graduate and student professional nurses are reported separately for the first time, but the census figure for students is far short of the enrollments in the schools of nursing as of January 1, 1950. Census information on the age distribution of those included in the professional nurse count suggests that more than 20,000 individuals reported as professional nurses may actually be students. Adjustments, on this basis and in terms of probable enrollments at the time that the census was taken, give totals of 99,700 professional student nurses and 374,600 employed professional nurses. The combined total for these two categories shows an increase of 34.5 percent over the 1940 census count.

It should be borne in mind that the figure on professional nurses includes all employed graduate nurses whether or not they are currently registered. It seems likely that some nonprofessional nursing personnel also may be included, but the meager data now available from other sources suggest that this error is relatively inconsequential.

Other Health Occupations

The census enumerations of several occupations closely allied to medicine are considerably lower than estimates of active practitioners in 1950 available from the professional associations. Some comparative figures are given below:

	<i>Census Association</i>	
Chiropractors	12, 897	20, 512
Optometrists	15, 476	19, 724
Osteopaths	5, 146	11, 155
Veterinarians	13, 410	15, 305

The figures from the associations include persons in the armed forces and may include some who are retired, inactive, or devoting the major part of their time to other occupations. Adjustment for these factors still shows that the census counts are substantially lower than the estimates from other sources. Further investigation of the census figures will be possible when State tabulations showing detailed characteristics become available in the spring of 1953.

Mrs. Hobby New Federal Security Administrator



Oveta Culp Hobby of Houston, Tex., took office as Federal Security Administrator on January 21, 1953. Fourth Administrator since the Agency's creation in 1939, she will supervise the operations of the Public Health Service,

the Social Security Administration (including the Children's Bureau), the Food and Drug Administration, the Office of Education, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Howard University, St. Elizabeths Hospital, the American Printing House for the Blind, and the Columbia Institution for the Deaf.

At the time of her appointment Mrs. Hobby was editor and publisher of the Houston Post and executive director of Station KPRC-AM-FM-TV. Prior to World War II she served as parliamentarian, Texas House of Representatives, and was on the editorial and executive staffs of the Houston Post.

Mrs. Hobby came to Washington in 1941 as chief of the women's interest section of the War Department. When the Women's

Army Auxiliary Corps was created in 1942, she was appointed its director. She also served as director of the Women's Army Corps, with the rank of colonel, from 1943 to 1945.

The Administrator has been active in journalistic affairs, here and abroad, serving on the board of directors of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (1947-50), and as consultant-alternate to the Freedom of Information Conference at Geneva in 1948.

Mrs. Hobby has been a member of the board of directors of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. She has also been a member-at-large of the board of governors of the American National Red Cross. In 1948 she was a consultant to the Bipartisan Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government, and later became a member of the board of directors of the Citizens Committee for the Hoover Report.

National vice chairman of the 1949 American Cancer Society campaign and a member in 1950 of its national leadership committee and national advisory council, Mrs. Hobby also is a member of the board of directors of the Texas Medical Center.